1:Haskins K-4,5 (1952-1954)1956 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11



241 [464] The skills of the 196,000 workers are an important agricultural resource in the Recôncavo. This resource can best be evaluated in terms of the prevailing agricultural systems: hoe and rudimentary plow agriculture. Hoe agriculture is universal in the Recôncavo, and in a society so thoroughly permeated with agricultural activity it is fair to assume that, except for some completely urbanized laborers in Salvador, all workers are familiar with the simple tools of this form of cultivation. [249] Plow cultivation is more specialized; it is used throughout the sugar cane zone but only in preparing the fields for planting. The seedstalks are covered with a hoe, and knives are used [407] for weeding and harvesting. Outside the sugar zone plows are rarely encountered.

[231] The domesticated animals which play a prominent role in cultivation in the Recôncavo are oxen, horses, mules, and donkeys, and the rudiments of their management are almost universally understood. The prominent crops of the Recôncavo are ubiquitous--manioc, corn, beans, sweet potatoes, peanuts, tobacco, sugar cane, bananas, and oranges are grown in all areas, and their cultivation under the prevailing agricultural system is common knowledge. There is little present need for agricultural labor specialized beyond this level.

241 178 It is clear that the introduction into the Recôncavo of new, radically different crops or techniques of cultivation would alter this [181] relatively favorable situation. The agricultural worker of the Recôncavo, like his counterpart in many other parts of the world, is inherently conservative. As in the past, he will continue to resist even minor changes, such as improved methods of seed selection in corn or improved curing of tobacco. More radical changes would probably be [212] resisted more strongly. The problem of "selling" new ways of producing agricultural products is difficult not only because of the

1:Haskins K-4,5 (1952-1954)1956 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11



241 178 212 satisfaction with traditional ways but also because the low level of literacy makes difficult even the presentation of new methods. The low level of literacy directly limits the media available for propagation of new ideas, and there is little consciousness of the existence of other methods in other areas. These factors restrict the intellectual horizon and reduce the tolerance for change.

241 407 [242] [354] As yet, mechanized agriculture is almost unknown--there are probably less than fifty tractors in the entire Recôncavo. Agricultural machinery is confined almost exclusively to government agricultural experiment stations and extension services or to the largest sugar fazendas--in 1952-53 the tractors of the fazendas were largely unused because of the lack of new parts or general unsuitability for the tasks at hand. A very small number of agricultural workers have had any experience with agricultural machinery. The introduction of large quantities of farm equipment would raise many problems related to skill and receptivity. However, the truck, bus, and jeep are omnipresent in [493] the Recôncavo, and the number of competent drivers and mechanics is surprisingly large. Most of these mechanically skilled workers live in the cities and towns, but some are available everywhere, especially in the sugar area. In this area, too, many workers have had experience with such massive equipment as the ox-plow. Thus the introduction of tractors and their accessories into the sugar zone, the area most adapted to mechanization at the present moment, would find at least a small cadre of experienced workers available.

241 461 In addition to skills, the mode of labor and the attitude toward work are important factors in evaluating the agricultural labor force. Agricultural work in the Recôncavo tends to be a joint enterprise--it is joint effort which makes it possible to perform many heavy or arduous tasks with little mechanical assistance. On the cane plantations

249 cultivation which is monocultural and highly standardized. As has been indicated, small scale sugar cane cultivation--in house gardens--is omnipresent in the Recôncavo. The area in such garden cane, however, can scarcely be as much as one per cent of the total cropland.

249 471 Within the Central Recôncavo sugar cane is grown principally to supply a relatively small number of sugar usinas. The usinas either own and operate or rent and operate the cane plantations or have a stable relationship with those plantations from which they buy cane. Under these circumstances it is both necessary and relatively easy to standardize the methods of production and cultivation. The industrial aspects of sugar production will be discussed in the section on processing.

249 The general system of sugar cane cultivation involves a five-year sequence:

[407] [492] (1) The land is broken with a large ox-drawn, wooden plow. The cane plow opens parallel furrows, two to three feet apart, into which are laid pieces of cane stalk, cut from specially grown seed cane. The seed cane is then covered with hoes and packed with bare feet. Planting usually takes place during the last of the wet season--August and early September--to a lesser extent during the cane harvest--mid-September to mid-March--and at the end of the harvest in the autumn, if possible. Usually, however, the ground is too wet for planting during the months of May to August.

[412] (2) The cane is weeded frequently with a knife or a hoe. After a year of growth it is cut and carted away to the railroad. The leaves and upper stalk are left on the field and after drying are burned, except for some small part which is used as fodder.

(3) When the roots sprout again, the field is weeded and kept clean as the second-year cane develops; and after a year, the cane is harvested again. Generally this re-growth is repeated three times, so that there are four harvests for each planting.

1:Haskins K-4,5 (1952-1954)1956 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11



258 The manioc mill, called a casa de farinha, is found in most parts of
• 407 the Recôncavo except the sugar cane zone. At the mill the root of the manioc is scraped with a knife in order to remove the rough skin. It is then shredded by being held against a roughened rotating cylinder which is turned by a belt attached to a large wheel and crank. The crank is rotated by one or two workers, except in the few mills where small electric motors are attached. The shredded manioc, which has the appearance of moist sawdust, is shoveled into a press made of a hollowed log, and a lid is forced into the press in such a way that the juices
[401] are expelled through the holes in the sides and bottom. The necessary force is applied by means of a long lever drawn down with a large wooden screw jack. After the lid is forced downward as far as possible, the pressure is maintained until there is no perceptible leakage of
258 poisonous juices. In none of the mills observed in the area or described
[171] in the literature of the Recôncavo was the leaching process used, as is the practice in some other areas of Brazil. From the press the manioc is thrown upon the top of an earthenware stove where it is agitated until the remaining manihotoxine is volatilized and the flour is dry. The juices which have been expelled from the press usually are caught in flat pans which are then placed in the sun. Settling and evaporation produce a pasty residue of starch--tapioca--which is dried into thin sheets.

These mills are small, one-press operations carried on in enclosed adobe and thatch sheds. They are scattered over the countryside wherever manioc is grown. The 1940 census enumerated 200 casas de farinha in the Recôncavo, but the number must now be a good deal greater. In 1940 Cruz das Almas, according to the census, had no farinha mills, but in 1953 more than a dozen were observed. The number of mills is large not only because the capacity of each is limited

249
244
433
[231]
[233]
of livestock, which had a value greater than sugar cane but less than manioc.

Agricultural activities within the Recôncavo are localized in several distinct sub-regions, each with a specialized system of cultivation and each with either one or two principal crops. The primary agricultural subdivisions of the region are: (1) the sugar cane monocultural sub-region; and (2) the tobacco-manioc sub-region.

249 Sugar cane is grown as the exclusive crop in its major area of production--the pocket of coastal plain north of the Baía de Todos os Santos. Cane is generally cultivated under a four-year monoculture and one-year fallow system on large properties employing large quantities of hand labor and using oxen to draw plows and carts. Neither fertilizer [407] nor agricultural machinery is used to any appreciable extent. Most of [492] the animals used as labor in the production of sugar cane are brought [231] into the area from the sertão, and little livestock breeding is found [233] in this area. The processing of sugar cane is in the hands of a small [471] number of medium-sized usinas. The companies which own these usinas [178] are gradually buying up the plantations so that to an increasing extent the mills directly control the production of sugar cane. Most of the [497] cane is brought to the usinas by railroad, although sailing boats are [489] used for this purpose along tidewater. Most of the sugar produced in [505] the Recôncavo is consumed within the state of Bahia, but small quantities [438] [439] are shipped to other parts of Brazil. Both the aristocratic upper class [565] and the rising non-aristocratic business interests of the Recôncavo are [471] [472] involved in the ownership and administration of the sugar industry. The [464] permanent labor force is supplied from the settlements of the sugar cane [178] plantations and the mills, but the rural population and the labor force of the sugar area are declining. Seasonal labor for the harvest comes from the interior sertão of Bahia.

3s Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11



[The Private Plantation]

*249
[423]
[435]
*249
422

1 new, rural school, with rooms for classes and living quarters for teacher, constructed by the state on land donated by Dona Sinhá

Value of the plantation: Cr$1,500,000,00.[3]

Equipment: 1 Caterpillar tractor, model D2
1 John Deere plow
1 jeep
2 four-wheeled, rubber-tired wagons
9 juntas of oxen (the junta equals ten oxen, eight in use and two resting)
9 two-wheeled carts drawn by oxen--the antique and most used transportation in the Recôncavo
30 burros for carrying cane
12 saddle horses
35 milk cows and breeding mares
78 cattle for breeding purposes

*249
407
[493]
[177]
[412]

The Fazenda das Moças is unusual in its possession of a tractor, a mechanical plow, and a jeep. (Even more recently a second tractor and a mechanical cultivator have been added.) More commonly the pai adão (Father Adam) plow is used, drawn by eight oxen. According to Pinho the plow was introduced into Brazil in the late eighteenth century. Before this all cultivation was done with the hoe.[4] For the past 150 years the pai adão has been used primarily to open the rows in which the sugar cane is planted. All the rest of the cultivation is done by hand, with the hoe and billhook. The pai adão is a simple plow with a single plowshare. When it is drawn by oxen, a driver is needed, plus a small boy helper and another man to manage the plow. When it is drawn by tractor, only two men are needed, the driver and the plowman. Various properties of the soil, such as its hardness in the summer when it dries, its swamplike character during the rainy season, and the danger of turning up the infertile tauá which underlies the shallow layer of massapê, have made plowing difficult in the Re-

[461]

---

[436]

3. The cruzeiro (Cr$) is the Brasilian monetary unit and equals roughly five cents in United States currency. Thus the value of the plantation is approximately $75,000.00.

4. de Araujo Pinho, Historia de um engenho do Recôncavo, 1522-1944 (Rio de Janeiro, 1946), p. 243.

VILA RECÔNCAVO

[The Private Plantation]

côncavo. So far only the pai adão has been able to fulfill the plowing requirements. Lately, however, tractors with caterpillar tread have been introduced and, when used carefully with disk plows, have given excellent results. But the old standby is still commonly in use, hitched to eight, ten, twelve, or as many as twenty oxen.

The owner's house with its park stands on a small hilltop and is visible from afar because of its imperial palms. Nearby, on another hilltop, is the settlement of workers, a long street with houses on either side, the barracks, a small store, and the ever-present casa de farinha, the house where manioc is always being ground, pressed, and roasted to make the farina which is the staple food of the area. Also on this street is the overseer's house, which stands out from the others because of its large size and its veranda. The houses of the workmen are small and built for the most part under one long, common roof. Each house is really an apartment consisting of a front living room and a long corridor going back to the kitchen, with one or two bedrooms leading off the corridor. Other houses, under separate roofs, have similar interior arrangements. The roofs are of red tiles, the rest of the house of clay mud (taipa) slapped on both sides of a bamboo framework. After the mud has dried a coat of whitewash is applied. The houses are built and kept in repair by the plantation owner and do not belong to the workers. The floors are of beaten earth, difficult to keep clean. At night, when only a tiny oil lamp is burning, the houses look dark and gloomy.

After dark one has the impression of hearing much more than one can see. Kerosene is expensive to burn, no one reads, and most of life is geared to doing in the daytime those tasks which require light. At night the workmen and their families sit in the dark talking, or perhaps go to the casa de farinha where a fellow workman and his family may be grinding their manioc. This building is softly lit with kerosene lamps and there is a cheerful glow from the roasting fire. More recently the overseer's house has been equipped with electricity, and now it is always well lighted at night. His new radio has become a center of attraction and small groups form about his veranda, listening. At the other end of the street, during harvest time, there is always a bonfire in front of the barracks where the migrant workers are sheltered. On special occasions there may be a samba (dance), perhaps in the plantation owner's house. Then everyone dons his best and the

2: Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11

VILA RECÔNCAVO

[The Private Plantation]

As a result, owners have to be satisfied with higher costs than they feel necessary and less profit than they think possible, the difference going to the overseer, rather than accept the complete failure of the plantation Overseers, foremen, and owners are all aware of the situation, but politeness, the traditional respect patterns, and the unwillingness to compete openly keep the situation covert. 249* 463 466 571

Nevertheless, on Fazenda das Moças, in spite of these difficulties there is considerable cooperation between Dona Sinhá and Seu Paulo. The duties of the overseer are confined generally to the plantation itself--seeing that the work is done, the cane planted, cultivated, harvested, and delivered to the factory as expediently as possible. The duties of Dona Sinhá are mainly concerned with finance, with arranging ready funds to meet the current expenses of the plantation. The practice of mortgaging crops did not end with the abolition of slavery, and it is the owner's task to juggle funds, loans, and interest so she will have enough money to improve and increase the yield of her plantation. In general the owners of single plantations rarely have enough funds to carry them through the year. Payrolls are met throughout the year with advances on the estimated harvest made by the factory, by the banks, or by the Cooperative of Sugar-Cane Growers and Suppliers. Thus when the season ends the owner is already in debt, part of which he must pay off in order to finance the coming year. There are two problems constantly present in the struggle to increase the size of the harvest: cost of production, and the antiquated methods used on the private plantations, where practically all work is done by hand. 249* 463 426 [433]

Table 1 shows production, costs, and profits for the harvests of the years 1947-48, 1948-49, and 1949-50 at Fazenda das Moças. The drop in production and the rise in costs in the years 1948-49 were attributed to a slackening of the vigilance of Dona Sinhá and to a poor overseer. It was at the end of this year that Seu Paulo assumed the position of overseer of the plantation. The following year showed a great improvement which has continued, for the 1950-51 harvest produced 6,000 tons, the highest output of any private plantation in the Recôncavo. Future harvests are expected to go well above this. In addition to changing the overseer, and in the following year the foreman, Dona Sinhá was able to borrow enough money to purchase the tractor mentioned earlier. The next year, as a result of the evident success of the new combination, two four- 249* 43 [426] [407] [493]

3: Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11
VILA RECÔNCAVO



TABLE 1
PRODUCTION, COSTS, PROFITS: FAZENDA DAS MOÇAS

| | |
|---|---|
| **1947-1948** | |
| 4,000 tons of cane at the selling price of Cr$81,40 a ton | Cr$325.600,00 |
| Cost of production | 206.244,00 |
| Profit | 119.356,00 |
| **1948-1949** | |
| 2,500 tons of cane at Cr$88,90 | 222.250,00 |
| Cost of production | 225.198,00 |
| Loss | 32.948,00 |
| **1949-1950** | |
| 5,000 tons of cane at Cr$107,40 | 537.000,00 |
| Cost of production | 319.248,00 |
| Profit | 217.751,00 |

wheeled carts were added which could be drawn by the tractor, thus cutting down transportation costs. Recently a jeep was acquired to pull the carts, and a second tractor equipped with the mechanism to cultivate cane fields was purchased.

Still, the plantation is heavily in debt, and any profits are immediately used for improvements or for paying off debts. Moreover, the cost of tractors, jeeps, and fertilizer is very high since they are imported products. Because of the dollar exchange rate their cost is extravagantly high in Brazil, compared with the United States. In addition, the plantation is still burdened with the old equipment and the necessity of pasture for the oxen, which cuts down the acreage available for planting. Animal traction cannot yet be entirely dispensed with, because of the condition of the soil in winter. The problem of maintaining the old system of work as well as introducing the new, which can only slowly pay for itself, is considerable. Dona Sinhá is faced with the dilemma of difficult natural conditions which, while good in many ways for sugar cane, impede the application of modern techniques. She is also faced with personnel problems in relation to the overseer. One solution is clearly apparent and has been adopted by Dona Sinhá: to spend more and more time on the plantation, sharing more and more work with Seu Paulo. This of course is a complete break with the past traditions of the plantation master. It is a difficult break for both parties concerned. Dona Sinhá misses her city

21 Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11



chang[illegible]. New faces and basically different relationships prevail a[illegible] Usina São Pedro.

A[illegible]r change, but this time in tune with the past, was an increase of capital, applied to the improvement of the factory. The capacity of the mill has been greatly enlarged. However, the agricultural part of the combination continues as it did before, with no innovations. The result is that the factory is able to mill and produce sugar much more quickly than it can be supplied with sugar cane. The hierarchical aspect of the factory as earlier diagrammed remains the same, and each plantation is still run as a separate unit.

In contrast, the private plantation in the community of Vila Recôncavo has undergone relatively little change in these five years. Always the most conservative element in the Recôncavo, the private plantation continues to retain its distinguishing feature: the personal, face-to-face, paternalistic owner-worker relations. The hierarchical pattern remains the same. Operations are still basically hand- and animal-powered, but private planters are slowly introducing mechanization in certain aspects of the process, especially that of transportation; trucks and tractor-drawn wagons carry cane from the fields to the factory. Tractors and mechanical plows are used to an increasingly large extent in the preparation of the soil, and mechanical cultivators are already in use on some plantations. However, the bulk of the work is still done by hand, and traction is supplied by oxen and mules. As yet no mechanical loaders, ditch-diggers, or planters have appeared, and little use is made of fertilization or herbicides. Few scientific agricultural practices are in use. The planter is still first and foremost a "practical" man.

Relations between the factory and the private plantations have also undergone considerable change, in both business and social aspects. The new managers of the factory have succeeded in almost completely alienating the private planters who supply them with sugar cane. Not only the members of the extended Conde family, but also other cane suppliers resented the highhanded, brusque methods of the new managers. Wishing to break completely with the past, the new managers instituted several new policies in relations with the cane suppliers. Formerly the private suppliers bought sugar by the sack, bought their supplies at the company store, and had their machines repaired at the company workshops, paying for such services at the end of the harvest season. The sup-

2t Hutchinson E-4, 5 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11
VILA RECÔNCAVO

178
*249 pliers were presented with accounts showing how much cane
571 had been sent to the mill, the price, how much the factory had
452 paid the bank on the supplier's loans, how much had been ad-
vanced the supplier for his cane, and how much was still owed
● 407 the supplier, discounting the costs of services received from
the factory facilities. This has been traditional practice, not
only at Usina São Pedro, but also at the other factories of the
178 area. Now, however, Usina São Pedro expects to receive
*249 cash at the moment of the transaction for each such service
571 the supplier receives. In addition, the factory has gradually
407 cut down on the number of services it offers the suppliers.
437 This has been particularly serious regarding services of the
mechanics, as the private suppliers have no other source of
repair for their machines except in the city; taking them into
the city costs a great deal of time and is more expensive than
were the services performed by the factory mechanics.

178 The new managers at first charged an automatic discount
*249 upon the cane tonnage supplied by each private plantation. This
571 resulted in a considerable loss of money at the end of the year
432 for each private supplier, thereby straining even more the
relations which daily were becoming more and more disagree-
[656] able. Any question of scale and tonnage is a touchy one for
private planters, who sell their cane by the weight. The dis-
count charged on general principles by the factory was so
serious a matter that several of the private suppliers united
and called the Institute of Sugar and Alcohol to their defense
and succeeded in correcting the situation. This was a "first"
for Usina São Pedro, where such a thing had never before
happened, and where such a recourse is considered an ex-
treme.

178 Social relationships between the private planters and the
*249 managers of the factory are almost nonexistent. Whereas a
571 few years ago the factory was the central gathering point for
the social life of the planters of the area, it is now a place to
be avoided. In addition to making working conditions difficult,
the new managers and their families are "outsiders" in this
small, closed plantation society, with different backgrounds
and manners. As a result of the new conditions, the private
planters are spending more time on their plantations than be-
fore, but their social life rotates from one plantation to an-
other, skipping the factory nucleus. This pattern is also re-
flected in the activities of the resident workers, who are up-
set at the treatment shown to the older employees of the fac-

2; Hutchinson E-4, 6 (1950-1951) 1957 SO11 Bahia Brazilians SO11
VILA RECÔNCAVO

178
245
242
[434]

can collect bananas, which should pay for the operating costs while waiting for the cacao to mature.

At the end of a five- or six-year period, the shade tree is usually large enough to provide sufficient shade, and the banana trees are gradually removed. At the same time the cacao begins to give its fruit, and one can then consider himself a cacauicultor.

178
245
461
464
[407]

Several planters in Vila Recôncavo are at the banana-manioc planting stage, and have met with their first serious labor problem. No one wants to work in banana and manioc fields, as the work is arduous and slow. Machines are not available for the mechanical cultivation of manioc, so the work must be done by hand. The work is slowly being accomplished, but at costs which will make the manioc a considerable liability.

178
245
433
*[247]

Nevertheless, in spite of these difficulties, there is considerable interest in cacao in Vila Recôncavo, and cacao must be considered as an element of change in the community which will have far-reaching effects. The area of sugar production will be considerably reduced, requiring adjustments on the part of the factories, which represent large financial investments. Furthermore, cacao is a fairly simple product to process--its conversion into chocolate is usually done after export --and so it is quite likely that each plantation will return to the older aspect of the plantation, both growing and processing the crop, and become once again a highly self-sufficient unit. This would of course bring about a new alignment of socio-economic relations and would undoubtedly alter the community structure.

[571]

178
315
433

A third principal cause of change in Vila Recôncavo is the growth of a new and potent industry within the community and throughout the county. This new industry is the nascent Brazilian petroleum industry. Exploratory work was done in Vila Recôncavo in 1950 and 1951 under the guidance of the Conselho Nacional de Petroleo. Since that date a nationalized company, Petrobrás, has been formed to exploit the oil fields which lie under the topsoil of the county of Vila Recôncavo. Petrobrás has brought in several hundred oil wells and has built roads, pipelines, storage tanks, and machine shops. Just outside the limits of the community, but within the county, it has built its oil refinery and has created a small new, modern city to house the technical workers of the refinery and the field. On land expropriated from the Usina São Pedro it has also con-

[425]

from the competition of other sugar-producing areas. Abolition was the factor which, in many cases, simply ended a struggle several decades old.

The overall production of sugar in the Recôncavo was already dropping noticeably at the time of abolition, and it continued to decrease afterwards. At the end of the last century, state-supported *usinas*, or large mechanical factories for milling sugar cane, were opened in an effort to stimulate sugar production. At the same time, various other *usinas* were opened by private capital. These central mills received and processed the sugar cane of many plantations. The *usina* had the advantage of freeing the planter from the worries of milling and marketing the sugar, allowing him to concentrate on higher production of sugar cane, while the mechanized *usina* was able to produce more sugar out of the cane, thus increasing production. This system of sugar production proved relatively lucrative, and the government *usinas* passed into private hands. The owners of *usinas* bought as many neighbouring plantations as possible, and in this way the *usineiros*, as they were called, became at the same time the mill owners and sugar-cane planters—employers of factory workers and of agricultural workers. The plantations which did not pass into the hands of an *usina* became *fornecedores*, supplying cane to one or another large sugar mill.

The *usina* system, however, in many respects did little to change the traditional plantation system. The plantations belonging to *usineiros* continue as separate units; each generally had an administrator, a man responsible to the *usineiro*, who is in charge of the plantation. As a rule the administrator, who is an employee of the *usina*, lives in the old *sobrado*, the former residence of the *senhor do engenho*, as the old plantation owners were known. The workers on the plantations and their families frequently still live in *senzala*-like houses, usually a long narrow building under one roof divided into separate apartments of two or three rooms. Despite many changes of technology, many examples of the old and the new exist side by side on these Recôncavo plantations. On the same plantation both mechanical tractor and ox traction may be used to pull plows. There are workers' houses side by side, one with electricity and a radio, and another using candles and kerosene lamps. Furthermore, the hierarchy of workers and specialists in sugar-cane raising persists little modified from the early nineteenth century. There are the field hands, the ox-cart drivers, the artisans and other specialists. The plantation is also approximately the same size as it was in the early nineteenth century (although several may be the property of one company nowadays) and it has about the same number of hired workers as it had slaves before.

But the *usina* system and other outside influences have made for many fundamental changes in the Recôncavo. In the very large